

Message Text

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SUBJECT: POST EVALUATION OF SWEETWOOD/ELLIS VISIT

1. SUMMARY: VISIT OF REGIONAL RESOURCES OFFICER SWEETWOOD AND BUREAU OF MINES EXPERT ELLIS WAS OVERALL SUCCESS, DESPITE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY GECAMINES INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATIONS AND DELAYS IN OBTAINING GOZ PERMISSION FOR VISIT. DELICATE POLITICAL QUESTIONS WERE ADEPTLY HANDLED AND SINGLE LIMITATION IN SWEETWOOD/ELLIS TECHNICAL EVALUATION POSED BY THEIR RELATIVELY LIMITED BACKGROUND IN METALLURGICAL REFINING MATTERS DID NOT DETRACT SERIOUSLY FROM OVERALL USEFULNESS OF VISIT. END SUMMARY.

2. VISIT OF REGIONAL RESOURCES OFFICER CHARLES SWEETWOOD AND BUREAU OF MINES EXPERT MILLER ELLIS WAS AN OVERALL SUCCESS, THANKS BOTH TO THEIR PERSONABLE APPROACH AND PROFESSIONAL ABILITY AND TO THE GRACIOUS RECEPTION ACCORDED THEM BY GECAMINES, THE ZAIRIAN STATE-OWNED MINING COMPANY, WHICH WAS NOT ONLY THE ENTITY BEING SCRUTINIZED BUT ALSO THE HOST DURING THE THREE-DAY VISIT TO KOLWEZI.

3. GECAMINES SENIOR EXPATRIATE MANAGEMENT WAS NOT IN-
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PAGE 02 LUBUMB 01063 301022Z

FORMED ON THE FINAL DETAILS OF SWEET/ELLIS VISIT UNTIL THE LAST MOMENT BECAUSE FORMAL COMMUNICATIONS THROUGH GECAMINES ZAIRIAN-RUN PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE WERE TRANSMITTED ONLY TO THE OFFICE OF DELEGATE GENERAL UMBA WHO HAPPENED TO BE ABSENT. AT THE SAME TIME, RELEASE OF DOCUMENTS AUTHORIZING THE VISIT WAS DELAYED IN KINSHASA BY FOREIGN MINISTRY BECAUSE OF NETO VISIT. DESPITE

THIS, GECAMINES DEPUTY DELEGATE GENERAL PICQUET QUIETLY APPROVED VISIT AND SUMMONED TOP EXPATRIATE PERSONNEL TO HIS OFFICE FOR A PRELIMINARY BRIEFING. CONSULATE OFFICERS ASSURED PICQUET THAT GOZ PERMISSION DOCUMENT WOULD BE FORTHCOMING, AND IT WAS.

4. GECAMINES/KOLWEZI ZAIRIAN DIRECTOR WALA WAS FRANK AND HELPFUL. WALA ACCOMPANIED DELEGATION TO EVERY INSPECTION SITE AND WAS FORTHCOMING WITH BOTH BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND COMMENTARY ON THE PRESENT SITUATION AND POSSIBILITIES FOR THE FUTURE. WALA'S DEPUTIES WERE ALSO COOPERATIVE AND RESPONSIVE. DESPITE OBVIOUS FRICTION BETWEEN ZAIRIANS AND EXPATRIATES SENT FROM LUBUMBASHI "TO OFFER VIEWS ON THE LONG-TERM," SWEETWOOD AND ELLIS WERE NEVER EMBROILED IN ANY DISPUTE. DELEGATION'S PREFERENCE FOR CLOSER CONTACTS WITH ZAIRIANS DURING INSPECTIONS WAS OFFSET BY CORDIAL ATMOSPHERE AT DINNER HOSTED BY CONSUL TO WHICH TOP EXPATRIATE OFFICIALS WERE INVITED. SWEETWOOD AND ELLIS WERE COMFORTABLE IN BOTH MILIEUX AND THERE WERE NO SLIPS OR MISUNDERSTANDINGS WHICH MIGHT HAVE ENDANGERED SUSPICION OF USG'S POSITION OR INTERESTS IN GECAMINES/KOLWEZI OPERATIONS. POLITICAL QUESTIONS, SUCH AS THAT OF EXPATRIATES AT KOLWEZI WERE DISCUSSED PRIVATELY, BUT FRANKLY.

5. SWEETWOOD AND ELLIS MADE VALUABLE COMMENTS ON EQUIP-
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PAGE 03 LUBUMB 01063 301022Z

MENT MAINTENANCE AND SPARE PART SITUATION. THEY ALSO DISPLAYED CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF CURRENT OPERATIONAL TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES AND THE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE ABSENCE OF LONG-RANGE PLANNING IN THE MINING FIELD. HOWEVER, LIMITING FACTORS IN KOLWEZI COPPER/COBALT OPERATIONS SEEM TO LIE IN CONCENTRATOR AND METALLURGICAL REFINING AREAS. SWEETWOOD AND ELLIS WERE LIMITED TO THE ROLE OF REASONABLY INFORMED SPECTATORS AT THESE PLANTS. SWEETWOOD, WHO HAS EXTENSIVE MINING BACKGROUND, AND ELLIS, A TRAINED GEOLOGIST WITH FIFTEEN YEARS EXPERIENCE IN NEIGHBORING ZAMBIAN COPPERBELT, COULD NOT HOWEVER BE EXPECTED TO EXTRAPOLATE IN DETAIL FROM WHAT THEY SAW OR FROM COMMENTS OFFERED BY GECAMINES ZAIRIAN AND EXPATRIATE METALLURGISTS ON COMPLEX TECHNICAL MATTERS IN THIS FIELD.

6. CONSULATE CONCLUDES THAT SWEETWOOD AND ELLIS VISIT TO KOLWEZI INSTALLATIONS NOT ONLY ADDED TO MISSION'S AND WASHINGTON'S UNDERSTANDING OF SITUATION THERE BUT ALSO CONSTITUTED A LARGE PLUS FOR OUR RELATIONS WITH GECAMINES, BOTH WITH ZAIRIANS AND EXPATRIATES: OUR POSITION OF IMPARTIAL CONCERN WAS STRONGLY REINFORCED.

WE BELIEVE REPORTS TO BE GENERATED BY SWEETWOOD AND
ELLIS FROM THEIR OWN OFFICES WILL ALSO ADD DEPTH OF
DETAIL IN FURTHER EVALUATIONS OF KOLWEZI COPPER/COBALT
PRODUCTION POSSIBILITIES.
SIMPSON

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